



**swaa**

SOCIAL WORKERS  
ASSOCIATION OF  
ALBERTA

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
**2022**

**The Social Workers Association of Alberta**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>03</b>	Our Team	<b>14</b>	Communications
<b>04</b>	About SWAA	<b>16</b>	AGM Planning & Inaugural Board Election
<b>05</b>	President's Report	<b>19</b>	Membership Data
<b>07</b>	Executive Director's Report	<b>20</b>	SWAA & CASW
<b>10</b>	Board Committees	<b>21</b>	Financial Report
<b>11</b>	Governance	<b>23</b>	Where We're Headed
<b>13</b>	Recruitment	<b>25</b>	Contact Us

# OUR TEAM



**President**

Keith Goertzen



**Co-President**

Rasheal Charles



Darnel T. Forro



Mickey Ikuta



Shauna Livesey



Darlene Marchuk



Linda McFarlane



Michael J. Penner



Jane Slessor

## Staff:



**Executive  
Director**

Harold Pliszka



**Member Engagement  
Coordinator**

Kiara Hugh-Yeun

# ABOUT SWAA

The Social Workers Association of Alberta (SWAA) is a membership-based organization that was formed to promote the profession of social work, engage in social advocacy work, and provide meaningful support and benefits to Alberta Social Workers.

The government of Alberta passed changes to the Health Professions Act (Bill 46, 2020) that require all regulatory colleges, including the Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW), to stop providing association functions and activities.

Regulatory Colleges are designed to protect the public by setting standards, ensuring competence of its members and investigating complaints. Associations work on behalf of their members and on issues that matter to them, such as providing member benefits, professional development opportunities and advocating with government. Until now, the ACSW has functioned as a regulatory college and a professional association.

ACSW established a process to cease association activities, while providing resources that would establish a social work association in Alberta. This process included setting up a steering committee of social workers to appoint an interim board for a two-year term.

The interim board has been focused on setting up the organizational infrastructure of SWAA, which has included incorporating under the Societies Act, establishing bylaws, governance policies, hiring a part-time Executive Director and Member Engagement Coordinator, creating myswaa.ca, and setting up a social media presence.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



## President

Keith Goertzen

In January 2022, the interim board of what would become The Social Workers Association of Alberta (SWAA) met for the first time. We were selected by an Alberta College of Social Workers steering committee as part of their commitment to establish a new and independent social work association in Alberta. The interim board quickly recognized the significance of the work we had been given. As Social Workers ourselves, we knew firsthand the essential role we play in the lives of Albertans.

Early on, we reached out to you, asking for your input. You told us that you want an association that advocates for things that matter to you, connects you with one another, and helps you to grow professionally.

Driven by the belief that SWAA should be a member-driven organization, we focused our efforts on establishing the basic building blocks of the association so that we could pass the torch to the Inaugural Board – a board elected by its members. With that goal in mind, we incorporated as a society, drafted bylaws and policies, hired our first Executive Director and Membership Engagement Coordinator, built a website and membership platform, joined the national federation of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), and began to engage with you on social media and through email. There is so much more work to be done. Our hope is that the Inaugural Board will be able to hit the ground running.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As a central value of SWAA, our policies require that all board decisions explicitly consider Decolonization, Equity Diversity and Inclusion. The interim board has envisioned an association that is welcoming for all social workers. Again, there is much work to be done.

We haven't done this work alone. The Alberta College of Social Workers has been instrumental in supporting our efforts. They provided in-kind supports and resources, shared with us from their experiences, answered our many questions and gave us the independence we needed. They also provided the association with over \$225,000 in seed money. We have also benefitted from the support and wisdom of other social work associations across the country and from the CASW.

As SWAA holds its first Annual General Meeting and elects its inaugural board of directors, it is an important time to be a Social Worker in Alberta. Across the province, social workers are at the forefront of many of the most important issues facing Albertans. We are responding to the opioid crisis, advocating for better services for children and families, supporting people impacted by climate change disasters and housing the unhoused. As Albertans engage in important conversations about education, health care, policing, and reconciliation with Indigenous people and communities, the voice of Social Work is essential.

It has been a privilege to be the president of SWAA's interim board and to serve with a diverse group of brilliant, talented, passionate and devoted people. I am excited about the future of SWAA and social work in Alberta.



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

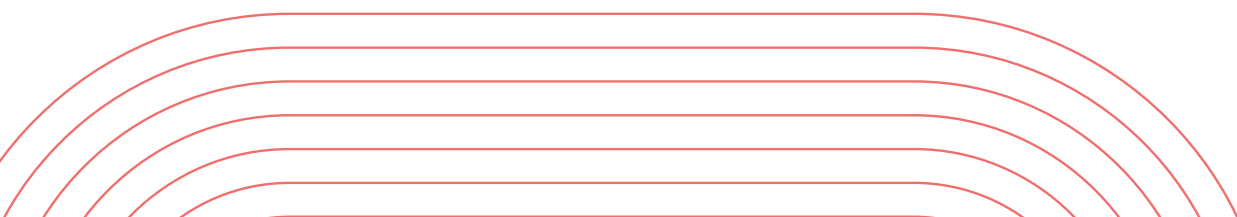


**Executive Director**  
Harold Pliszka

2022 was a momentous year for The Social Workers Association of Alberta (“SWAA”). The interim board worked diligently to bring SWAA into reality under the Society’s Act of Alberta, to create the Association’s foundational policies, to design our logo and first website, and were well on their way with social media.

I began with SWAA in December 2022, collaborating with the Board on membership categories and a fee structure that strikes a balance between SWAA’s financial sustainability and affordability for social workers at every stage of their careers. We selected a membership portal vendor and began accepting our first members in April 2023. As of August 14, 2023, we have 427 members, and we appreciate every single one of you – for your commitment to the profession and for placing your faith in a very new professional association.

I know many of you joined for the CASW membership and particularly for the BMS liability insurance program. I look forward to showing you value with networking opportunities, building ways for you to become involved in SWAA’s work (SWAA is your association, after all), and to advocate for the profession and for the communities we serve.

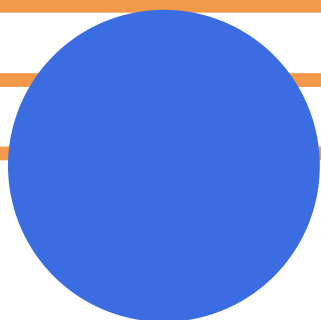


# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Social workers also told us that professional development opportunities are immensely important, and we will work to expand those opportunities as we grow.

In July 2023, we hired Kiara Hugh-Yeun as SWAA's first Member Engagement Coordinator. While the two of us are still part-time with SWAA, we expect this will greatly increase SWAA's capacity to build the organization and to serve social workers.

We have big plans, and we will collaborate with the inaugural board once they are elected by members at SWAA's first AGM on September 21, 2023.





# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

## Statement on the times:

As per the 2023 CASW theme, social work is indeed essential, and our work has been challenged over the last number of years by the COVID-19 pandemic, lacking access to mental health services, anti-harm reduction policies, inequitable seniors care, increased poverty, and an affordability crisis that has driven more people into food insecurity and houselessness. We are also seeing a higher frequency of extreme weather (i.e., fires, droughts, flooding, etc.) in Alberta, across the country and, all over the world. These issues are all important to everyone impacted, to social workers, and to your professional association. Thank you for all that you do to support people and communities through all these challenges. It is our goal to support you in the work you do, so please let us know how you would like SWAA to support you.

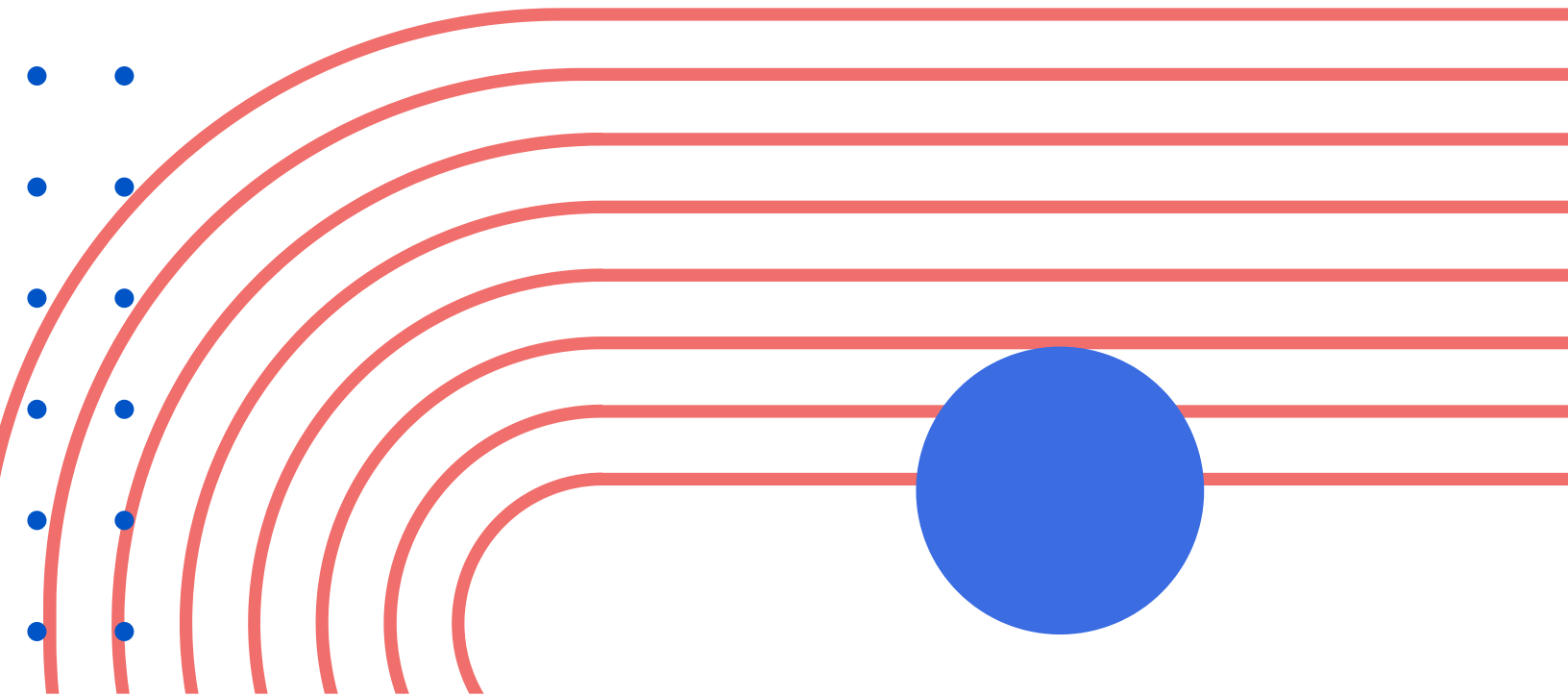
## Looking to the future:

- Collaborating with Indigenous Social Workers to identify SWAA's response to the Calls to Action of Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Establishing groups and committees on the topics and issues important to members
- Greater involvement in National Social Work Month
- Expanded advocacy for evidence-based public policies to better support the people and communities served by social workers
- Planning for a provincial social work conference

# BOARD COMMITTEES

The Interim board established several committees of board members who collaborated over the past year to build the association from the ground up. The work represented in the following reports is the result of thousands of volunteer hours.

- Governance Working Group
- Recruitment Working Group and Selection Committee
- Communications Working Group
- AGM Planning Committee and Inaugural Board Recruitment



# GOVERNANCE

**Members:** Linda McFarlane, Keith Goertzen, Rasheal Charles, Mickey Ikuta (Chair)

**Purpose:** The Governance Working Group (GWG) was formed in March of 2022 and met over 32 times to carry out duties related to board governance. Due to the small board makeup, the group was also responsible for operations and finance-related matters. With the mandate of establishing the Association, the GWG focused on establishing (vs. oversight) the infrastructure in the above three areas.

## Tasks Completed

### **Governance:**

Incorporated the Social Workers Association of Alberta; developed bylaws; developed an interim strategy; completed a board & board members evaluation; conducted the Executive Director annual evaluation; and developed governance policies.

SWAA worked with Mary Marshall, a legal counsel with support from the ACSW, to develop key policies and documents including, Financial Conditions & Resources, Diversity, Risk Management, Board Meeting, Social Media, Executive Director Performance Evaluation, Terms of References for standing committees, Privacy Statement, and Code of Conduct for directors & committee members. HR policy, Grievance policy, and Grievance Committee Terms of Reference are currently being developed.



# GOVERNANCE

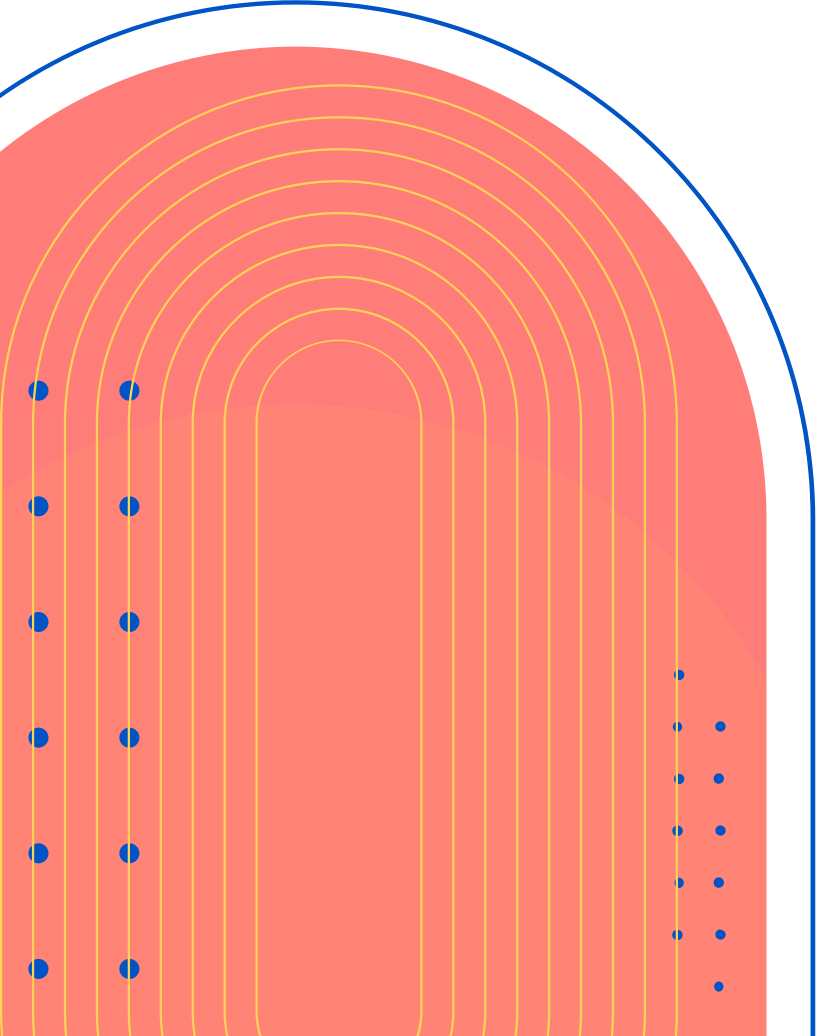
## Finance & Operations:

Set up banking and mailing address; developed first budget; developed financial modelling that informed fee schedules, received the seed funding from ACSW; reviewed budgetary decisions; and completed CRA filing.



## Future Activities:

Priority items to be considered for 2023-24 term include strategic planning and establishing a vision and a mission, development of additional policies as required, monitoring compliance and updating policies as required, developing a plan for board development and training, and leading the board's annual retreat.





# RECRUITMENT


**Members:** Shauna Livesey, Darnel T. Forro, Keith Goertzen,  
Jane Slessor, Linda McFarlane, Mickey Ikuta

**Purpose:** To carry out activities to recruit an executive director (ED) or other first employee as identified by the interim board. Meetings were held as required until the ED was hired.

The Recruitment working group was formed in March 2022 to identify the appropriate position title, job description, and the timeline for hiring. After exploring options, the board decided to seek a part-time ED on 1-year contract in the fall/winter of 2022.

In September 2022 the job was posted, and we received 19 applications. Through a two-step screening and selection process four candidates were identified for interviewing. In October an interview panel of four board members conducted the interviews and two finalists were selected. The finalists were invited to do a presentation at the October board meeting on what their first 100 days would entail as the ED including their ideas on a sample budgeting and key highlights and strengths they would bring to the position.

The board members voted and chose Harold Pliszka as the ED. He started his position on December 2022 after SWAA received the seed money from ACSW. Screening and selection tools were developed in collaboration by the committee/interview panel and included a shortlist criteria, a scoring sheet, and interview questions. SWAA is grateful to Carrie Aweduti who agreed to represent the Indigenous Social Workers in her capacity as chair of the Indigenous Social Work Committee. Carrie acted in a consultative role during the recruitment process.





# COMMUNICATIONS

**Members:** Jane Slessor, Linda McFarlane, Darlene Marchuk,  
Michael J. Penner, Rasheal Charles

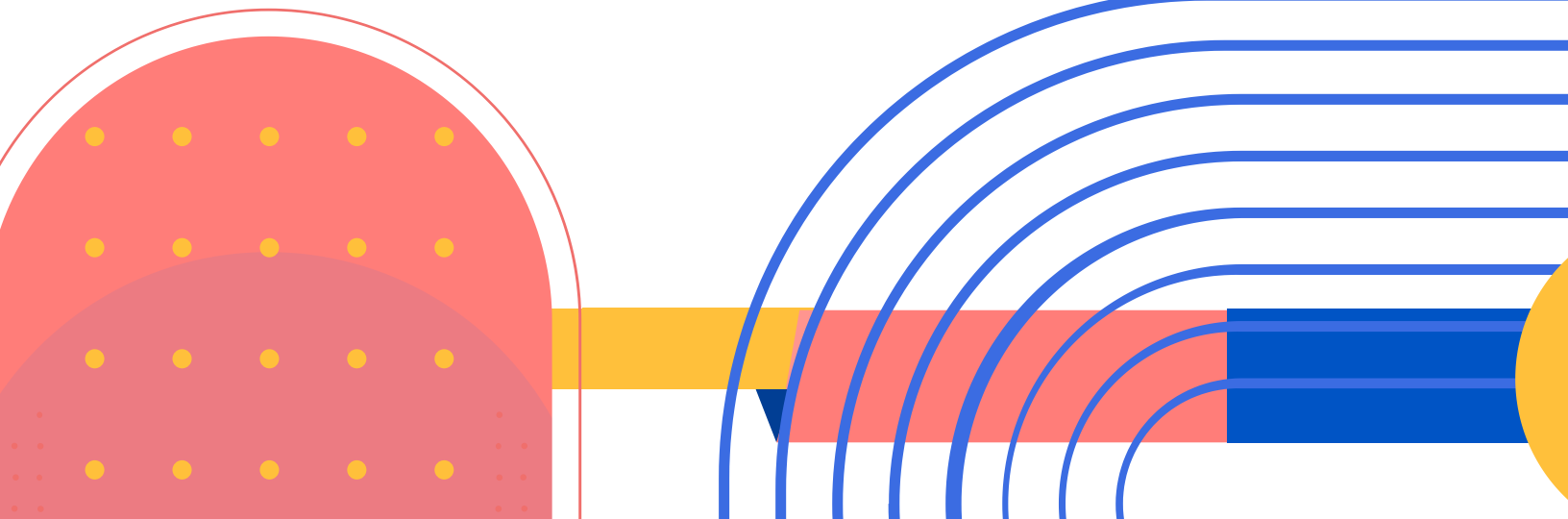
The communication working group/committee has been busy over the last year and a bit. Our biggest piece of work was collaborating with other board members and working with Bird Communications and web development agency to develop a communications plan and hone a visual identity (including our amazing logo) and our key messaging. Once we had our communications identity established, we were able to start connecting with future members!

SWAA's logo is based on Alberta's flower, the wildrose. It represents interdependency, diversity, and unity, values SWAA is committed to.



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# COMMUNICATIONS

We began with a survey to see how potential members would like to receive communications. What we heard was that many potential members, in addition to email, use Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter, so we established accounts for all of these platforms. Since then, we have been prioritizing working on our social media policies and guidelines, sharing relevant and useful content on social media, increasing our followers, promoting SWAA, and attracting future association and inaugural board members. Follow us if you don't already! [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#)

Generating an email circulation list and sending regular updates were other important priorities in establishing regular contact with future and existing members. Our email updates also promote SWAA, let members know of important upcoming events and share member benefits. If you aren't receiving emails yet, please [sign up](#)! In addition to our email efforts, we also worked with our web developer and our executive director, Harold, to support the building of our [website](#).

Finally, in the community, we have been connecting with graduating social work students at MacEwan University, University of Calgary, Red Deer Polytech, and Mount Royal. It was fun to see how excited new social workers are about SWAA!



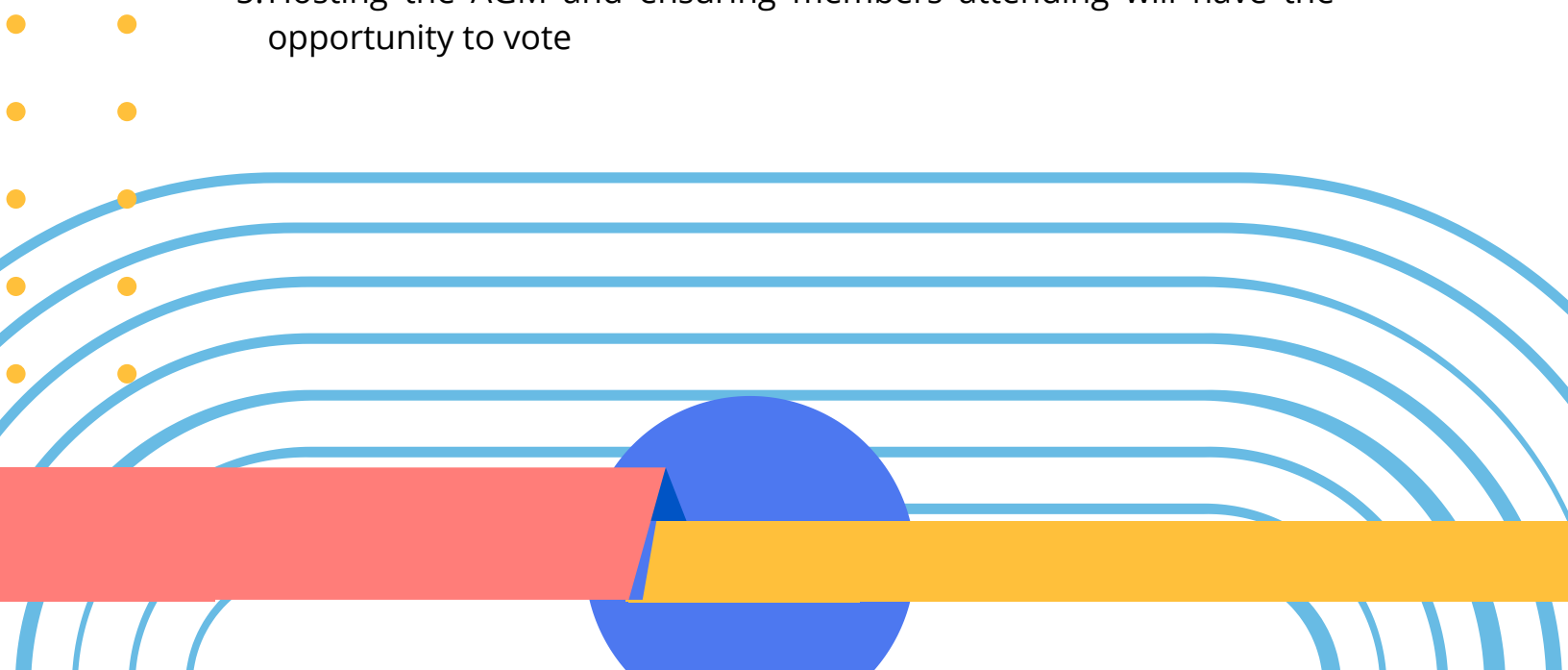
Pictured are a couple of our current comms folks at a MacEwan University student event!

# AGM PLANNING & INAUGURAL BOARD RECRUITMENT

**Members:** Shauna Livesey, Keith Goertzen, Linda McFarlane (Chair), Mickey Ikuta

The mandate of this committee was to act in accordance with SWAA bylaws and our Board and Committee Diversity policy to develop and put into action:

1. A strong recruitment process that encourages SWAA members to run and provides information on board roles, responsibilities and the mix of skills, experience, diversity and diversity of perspectives needed by the board
2. An informed, transparent and fair election and process for voting
3. Organization of SWAA's First AGM, via zoom and choosing a system that allows for online voting by SWAA members virtually present at the AGM
4. Ensuring that SWAA members receive an information package one month before the AGM. The package would include: date and time of AGM, how to register, annual and financial reports, candidate information, and voting information
5. Hosting the AGM and ensuring members attending will have the opportunity to vote





# AGM PLANNING & INAUGURAL BOARD RECRUITMENT

## Inaugural Board Recruitment Recommendations to the Interim Board:

The committee made these recommendations:

1. That we have 13 positions on the inaugural board.
2. That we initiate a recruitment process that reaches out to all members to invite them to submit an application to run for election.
3. That eligibility requirements are that applicants be SWAA members in good standing.

The interim board approved our recommendations.

*Note: Some boards present a slate of candidates for election while still allowing for others to apply. The benefits are being able to select members to meet specific needs for diversity, skills, experience. As an unelected board we felt that the recruitment process as recommended was appropriate.*

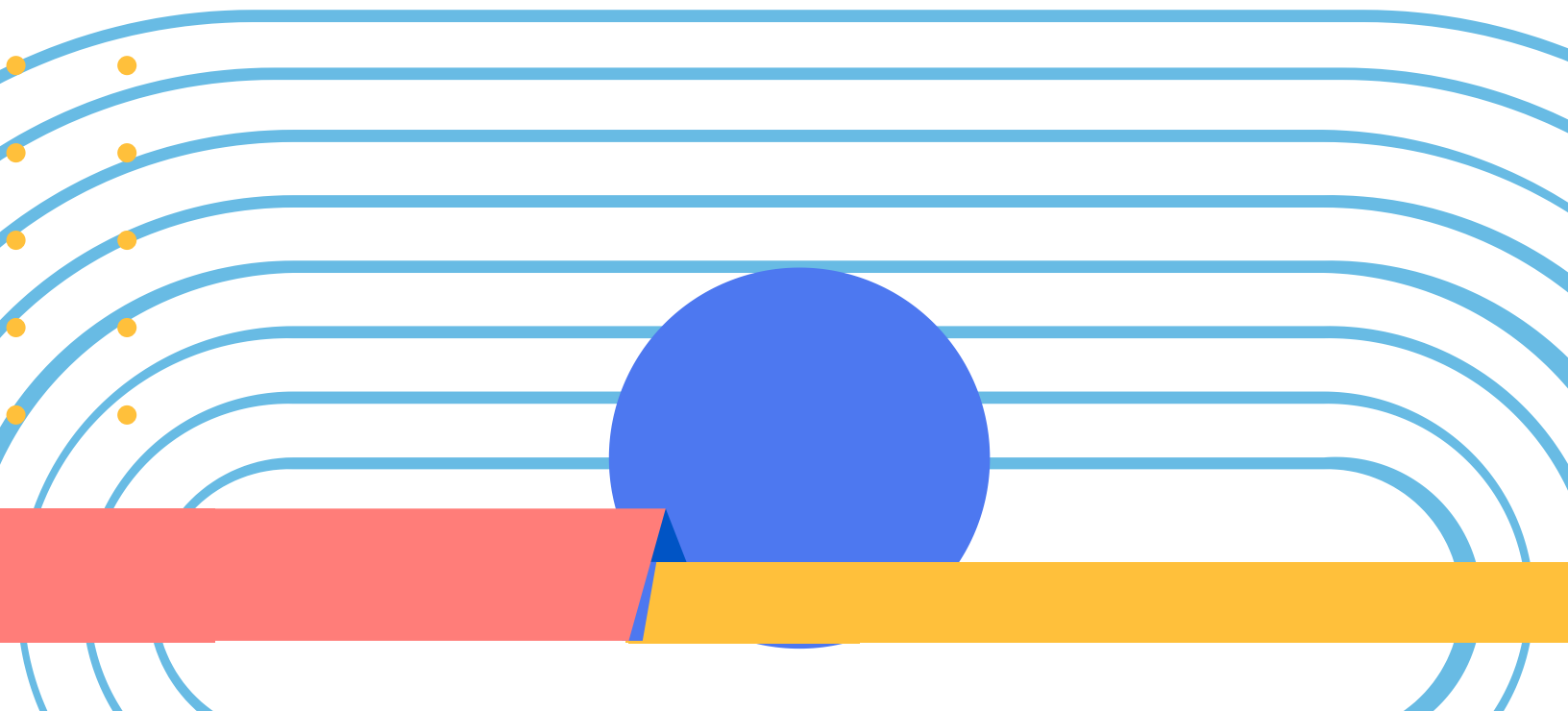
We also considered how to stagger terms so that the inaugural board would not have a potential complete turn over. We decided to stipulate that interim board members running for election would run for one-year terms while new members were asked to commit to two-year terms.

# AGM PLANNING & INAUGURAL BOARD RECRUITMENT

We are encouraged and very happy that over 20 wonderful SWAA members including a number of interim board members applied. We have also learned much in the process.

The AGM will be held via zoom and feature highlights of annual reports, a Q&A, and a vote.

We are grateful that Elder Kerrie Moore has agreed to open the AGM and that Christina Tortorelli from MRU and Julie Mann Johnson from U of C have generously agreed to present. They will discuss with us their research and recommendations and follow up as highlighted in their opinion column, "Child Welfare Crashes and Burns in Alberta" published July 1, 2023, in the Calgary Herald. <https://calgaryherald.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-child-intervention-crashes-and-burns-in-alberta>

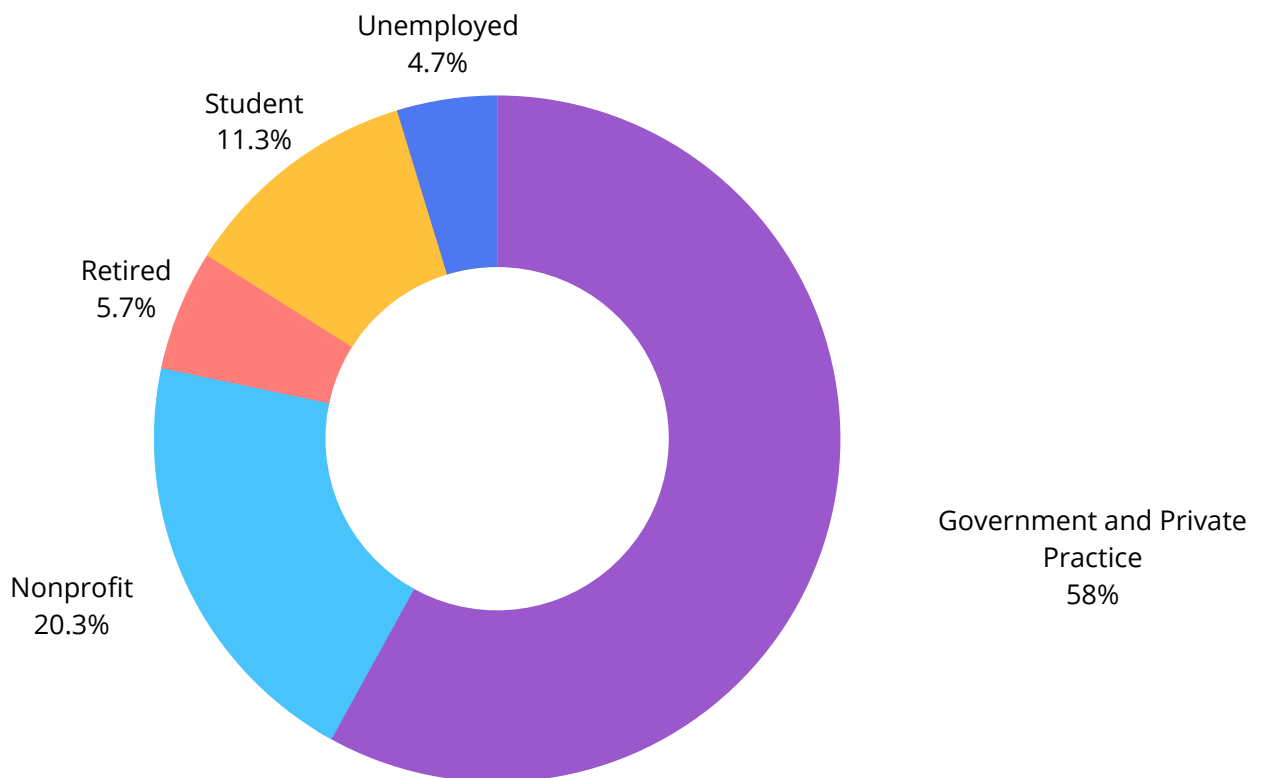


# MEMBERSHIP DATA

**Purpose:** to inform organizational review and future planning

**Who We Are:** 424 social workers and students (captured: August 2023)

Member Category	Number
Government and Private Practice Social Workers	246
Nonprofit Social Workers	86
Student Social Workers	48
Retired Social Workers	24
Unemployed Social Workers	20



# SWAA & CASW

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) officially welcomed the Social Workers Association of Alberta (SWAA) to the national federation with the signing of the federation partnership agreement on April 11, 2023. In joining CASW, SWAA members will maintain seamless access to national benefits and services while strengthening the federation's voice to promote the profession and advocate issues of social justice.

## **Direct Benefits of Membership:**

- Continuing Education Opportunities and webinars
- Affiliation to the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and automatic affiliation to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)
- Access to a national Group Insurance Plan including Professional Liability Coverage
- Access to reduced group rates for health, home and auto insurance
- Canadian Social Work journal
- Canadian Social Work Review journal
- National representation on coalitions and sustained lobbying to the Parliament of Canada that is focused on promoting and strengthening the profession while advocating on issues of social justice. See latest initiatives.
- Access to Job Opportunities
- Access to the Private Practice Portal
- And many more!

# FINANCIAL REPORT

	2022	
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$226,237</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,048</b>	
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$224,189</b>	

See 2022 financial statements  
for more information.

# WHERE WE'RE HEADED

It has been a very exciting journey to plant seeds and watch them bloom. As we forge ahead, we also look to where we started. Over the last few months in preparation for the future, we can confidently see that we also have strong roots that are going to support sustainability and growth for our future association.

We are enthusiastic about three areas we've focused on in many of our decisions and structures that we've put in place: Our Membership, Our Diversity and Our Collaboration:

**SWAA Membership.** The interim board set out to have a modest number of social workers join the association and we were elated by the amount of members we have to date. We continue to build a strong foundation that is built on innovation, respect and the interest and well being of Albertans. As a secondary gain, we hope to be robust in our advocacy by engaging with service users but to also be in service to Social Workers. We hope that the efforts in advocacy will translate to education opportunities, partnerships and our membership will continue to have a voice throughout the province. As we seek to raise awareness we also seek to be a source of support and solidarity in light of our ever-changing landscape in our communities in Alberta.

**SWAA Diversity.** In our current policies and practices, we hope to champion diverse practices that steers away from it being an afterthought. Our policies are reflective, and we continue to be mindful of avoiding harmful practices and staying true to anti-oppressive frameworks in our presence. We are concerned about incorporating Indigenous ways of practice and consider perspectives that rank high on decolonization. We also recognize that at times that we may be desensitized but hope to include persons from diverse backgrounds to influence our system to ensure equity for all.

# WHERE WE'RE HEADED

**SWAA Collaboration.** In our short time together, we have witnessed the power of collaboration. We have networked and/or met with an number groups and are excited about building the partnerships that lie ahead:

Alberta Association of Black Social Workers  
Alberta Association of Nurses  
Alberta Association of Physiotherapy  
Alberta College of Social Workers  
Alberta Dental Association  
Alberta Health Services  
Assembly of Alberta Social Workers  
BC Association of Social Workers  
BMS Insurance  
Bow Valley College Social Work students  
Calgary Social Workers for Social Justice  
Canadian Association of Social Workers  
CASA Mental Health  
Chiropractic Association of Alberta  
Edmonton Catholic Schools  
Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues  
Friends of Medicare  
MacEwan Social Work Club  
NDP MLA, Lori Sigurdson  
Calgary West Central Primary Care Network of Social Workers  
Primary Care Physicians of Alberta  
Special interest groups through ACSW - Indigenous social workers  
Special interest groups through ACSW - Elder groups  
TD Insurance  
University of Alberta  
University of Calgary  
Volunteer Alberta

# CONTACT US

*We want to hear from you!*

## The Social Workers Association of Alberta



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